Employer Trip Reduction Programs
(Employee Commute Options)

Description

An area-wide employer trip reduction (ETR) program is a state or local government regulation requiring employers, usually those with more than a certain number of employees, to develop and implement plans that encourage workers to switch from single occupant vehicles for commute trips. Typical features of an ETR are car and/or van pooling, subscription bus service, pedestrian facilities, shuttle services, guaranteed rides home, alternative work schedules, financial incentives (transit passes and subsidies), telecommuting and on-site travel demand management support.

ETR programs were originally required under the Clean Air Act for certain regions of the United States, including Northwest Indiana. Due to public opposition to this requirement, ETR programs were not mandated and became voluntary measures.

Employers absorb the costs for ETR programs. However, costs can be partially offset through tax incentives and subsidy programs. Employer costs also can be offset through savings produced by reduced parking demand.

An on-site program coordinator administers and monitors the program for the employer. ETR programs are used in Minneapolis-St. Paul, Seattle, Baltimore and many California cities.

Emissions Reductions*

ETR programs reduce volatile organic compound (VOC), nitrogen oxide (NO_x), and carbon monoxide (CO) emissions. ETR programs can reduce mobile source VOC emissions by an estimated 0.9%.

Estimated Cost*

The average cost per daily round trip avoided through an ETR program is estimated at $10.30. The cost per ton of mobile source VOC emissions reduced is estimated to be $365,000.

Other Benefits and Considerations

In addition to emissions reductions, ETR programs can offer the following benefits to commuters and the community:

- Reduced vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and congestion.
- Reduced fuel consumption and travel costs.
- Increased mobility options.
- Hands-free time to prepare for day ahead.
- Preferential parking.
- Public/private partnerships.

Implementation Issues

Ability to sustain program effectiveness: If management support, financial commitment, employee-turnover or other factors wane, the program's effectiveness can diminish.

Parking costs and constraints: Program effectiveness is partially dependent on limited availability and costs to the employee for parking. If parking is constrained and employees have to pay a parking fee, trip reduction incentives are more attractive and ultimately the program is more effective.

Subsidies: The most successful programs in the nation offer commute subsidies or lower parking fees for ridesharing.

Mandatory participation: Mandatory participation is the key to assuring widespread participation by enough employers to generate an area-wide impact. However, mandatory participation is not accepted well by employers or employees.

Start up: Depending on the size of employer and the diversity of the elements that make up the overall program, start up can take anywhere from six months to three years.

Monitoring: Continual monitoring of program effectiveness by employers can be expensive due to the demand for time, resources and technical expertise. Oversight by state or regional agencies can be difficult and complex.

Comments

To learn more about transportation control measures, contact Scott Deloney at (800) 451-6027 press zero and ask for extension 3-5684 or dial (317) 233-5684 direct.

*A. Costs and Effectiveness of Transportation Control Measures, National Association of Regional Councils, Apogee Research, Inc., 1994.